

Urinary Incontinence in Older Persons: A Simple Approach to a Complex Problem

T L Tan,**FAMS, MRCP (UK)*

Abstract

Urinary incontinence is a major geriatric syndrome with significant morbidity and even mortality. However, it is under-recognised and inadequately managed despite its impact and cost. Continence in the older person is maintained by the fine balance between the integrity of the lower urinary tract, the cognitive ability and motivation to keep dry, and adequate mobility and dexterity to void; impairment of any of the three can result in incontinence. The management of older persons with urinary incontinence involves, i) identifying and reversing transient incontinence, ii) excluding urinary retention, iii) deciding on the need of special tests (imaging, screening for malignancy, magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] for spinal cord, urodynamic assessment) to exclude sinister causes, and iv) deciding on the need to refer the specialist. With careful evaluation, continence in the older persons can be restored in most cases.

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* Consultant

Department of Geriatric Medicine

Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Address for Reprints: Dr Tan Thai Lian, Department of Geriatric Medicine, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, 11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng, Singapore 308433.

Email: thai_lian_tan@ttsh.com.sg